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22. The sheet member fixing device according to claim 13, wherein the rod is of substantially constant diameter between said two ends.

ADDITIONAL FEE:

Please charge any insufficiency of fee, or credit any excess, to Deposit Account No. 50-0427.

R E M A R K S

The Office Action issued December 13, 2002 has been received and its contents have been carefully considered.

The claims of this application have been carefully reviewed and amended to place them in proper form under U.S. Patent Practice. The comments of the Examiner regarding claim 13, set forth on pages 2 and 3 of the Office Action, are noted with appreciation and have been addressed in these amendments.

Claim 13 has also been amended to distinguish patentably over the cited prior art. Claim 13 now recites a "sheet member fixing device consisting of" three elements:

(a) a single rod having a male thread and a hook at one end;

(b) a nut having a female thread therein and screwed onto the rod; and

(c) a washer surrounding the rod between the hook end and the nut.

Claim 13 thus defines the device shown in Figs. 34-42 of this application.

Claim 13, as originally presented, was rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being clearly anticipated by either U.S. Patent No. 3,641,805 to Reinke or U.S. Patent No. 4,502,317 to Hultquist. As these rejections may apply to claim 13 as amended, they are respectfully traversed.

Claim 13 now recites an extremely simple and inexpensive "fixing device" consisting of only three elements: a rod, a nut and a washer. In contrast, the sheet metal puller of Reinke and the dent pulling tool of Hultquist comprise multiple machined elements which are connected together to perform essentially the same job as the sheet member fixing device of the present invention.

The tool of Reinke consists of a block having a pair of rod members for insertion into drilled openings in the sheet metal. A third rod member, with a handle, is also screwed into the block.

The tool of Hultquist is even more complicated. It includes a tiltable cylinder mounted on a shank. The cylinder is oriented parallel to the shank to permit it to be inserted through a hole in the metal to be straightened. Thereafter, the cylinder is tilted perpendicular to the shank by means of a separate rod. Furthermore, a sheath is slideably mounted on the shank below the cylinder to prevent the hole from closing around the shank as the metal is pulled outward.

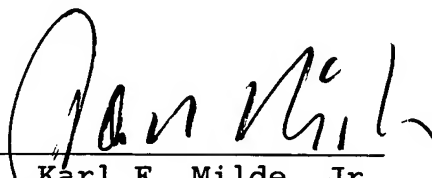
As the Examiner will appreciate at a glance, applicants' device is capable of performing the same functions as the tools of Reinke and Hultquist, and can be manufactured at a fraction of the cost.

All of the remaining references cited by the Examiner as being of interest have been carefully reviewed but are believed to be inapplicable to claim 13, as amended, for the same reasons as Reinke and Hultquist.

Since all of the claims of this application have now been amended to render them clear and definite, and since claim 13, the only independent claim of this application, distinguishes patentably over all of the references, this application is believed to be in condition for immediate

allowance. A formal Notice of Allowance is accordingly
respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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VERSION TO SHOW MARKINGS OF CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 13-21 to read as follows:

13. (Twice Amended) [In a] A sheet[-like] member fixing device [comprising] consisting of a single rod [like] having two ends and a male thread thereon, [and] a nut having a female thread therein, [the improvement] screwed onto said rod between said two ends and a washer surrounding said rod between one end and said nut, wherein the [male lead thread] rod has a hook on [its] said one end [portion and is screwed into the female thread], wherein the [female thread] nut is tightened toward said one end after passing the [male thread] rod through a hole of a sheet[-like] member, and wherein the sheet[-like] member is supported by sandwiching it between the hook, the washer and the [female thread] nut.

14. (Twice Amended) The sheet[-like] member fixing device according to claim 13, wherein the [male thread] rod is passed through the hole from [its hook's side] said thread.

15. (Twice Amended) The sheet[-like] member fixing device according to claim [14] 13, wherein the [hook is] rod has a substantially square [to the male thread] cross-section.

16. (Twice Amended) The sheet[-like] member fixing device according to claim [15] 13, wherein [the male thread is fixed in the] a threaded portion of the rod extends in a direction substantially perpendicular to that of the hook [while] when the hook is brought [in close] into flush contact with the surface of the sheet[-like] member.

17. (Twice Amended) The sheet[-like] member fixing device according to claim [15] 13, wherein the hook points [to] only in one direction.

18. (Twice Amended) The sheet[-like] member fixing device according to claim [15] 13, wherein [the] an edge of the hook [fixed] extending in [the] a direction substantially perpendicular to a threaded portion of the [male thread] rod is beveled.

19. (Twice Amended) The sheet[-like] member fixing device according to claim 13, wherein a handle is provided [to] on the other end of the [male thread] rod.

20. (Twice Amended) The sheet[-like] member fixing device according to claim 19, wherein the handle is ring shaped [like a ring].

21. (Twice Amended) The sheet[-like] member fixing device according to claim 13, wherein the [female thread can] nut includes means allowing it to be screwed down by hand.

Please add the following new claim:

-- 22. The sheet member fixing device according to claim 13, wherein the rod is of substantially constant diameter between said two ends. --